

AN ELEPHANT HUNT IN CEYLON.

A True Story Full of
Exciting Adventures



FORDING THE PANMEE RIVER

It was the end of February, 1897, when I landed in Colombo, on the island of Ceylon, and began making arrangements for an extensive elephant hunt.

Before leaving civilization it was essential to possess myself of numerous licenses and permits in order to proceed from the jungles of one province to the jungles of another unmolested and unchallenged. So, I addressed myself to the government agents of the Southern Uva and North-western provinces, inclosing in each request for permission to kill two elephants the customary fee of 500 rupees. From the agent of the island I procured a permit to bear the necessary firearms, and an additional game license.

At my hotel I met a Scotchman who had made his home on the island for twenty years, and, being a man of many experiences and an intelligent sportsman, I received much valuable advice and necessary information. Finally, I left all preliminary arrangements entirely in his hands, and he set about procuring provisions, carts, bullocks, firearms, etc., securing trackers and the services of the famous skilkarie, known to all sportsmen who have hunted under his guidance as Sault.

With this prince of the jungle I entered into an agreement under his hand and seal wherein he promised for the consideration of 1,500 rupees to conduct with success the entire venture for three months, within which time six elephants were promised as possible targets.

My friend's long residence on the island had given him a knowledge of the climatic conditions, and he advised beginning my hunt in the southern province, leaving the north central province for its termination, the rainy season having begun then.

Before leaving for Hambantota I secured the services of a well-known Cingalese cook bearing the euphonious name of Thelemakappa. The paraphernalia of the hunt was sent by train to Matara, where my men received it with the bullock carts, and went on to join me at Hambantota.

My own journey by stage from Matara to Hambantota was filled with local color. Glances of typical Cingalese villages among the palms and coconut trees were obtained from the rapidly driven coach, the horses being driven on a run and changed at every sixth mile.

On the morning after my arrival I received a message from a friend, who was en route to Hambantota with a party, begging me to partially postpone my hunt, allowing them to overtake me, and in a way join our forces for our mutual pleasure and benefit. I replied, agreeing to his proposition, and began preparations for a local hunt.

My retinue consisted of the much-

sought Sault, four trackers (among these the redoubtable blind tracker Madama and his brother Bundwa), four skinkers, eight coolies, two gun-bearers, the cook, five bullock carts containing provisions, and twenty-four bullocks.

My collection of firearms was appropriately complete, consisting of two 10-bore (smooth), one .500 English express rifle, a .38-calibre Winchester rifle, a 16-bore (smooth), and an American 12-bore repeating rifle. With this somewhat formidable following and rather elaborate accoutrements, I set out for Weligath and prepared to enter the jungle.

Arising in the morning at 5 and getting gun-bearers and trackers together, I determined to track a "rogue" elephant that had been guilty of many dark deeds, having nearly demolished an adjacent village. A rogue elephant bears a strong resemblance to any other rogue, being a male elephant, spurned by the herd to which he would naturally belong, and held in great dread by the natives, whose villages and crops he tramples at will, not hesitating to attack the villagers themselves.

This particular villain enjoyed the good fortune that frequently awaits the ungodly; the wind being in his favor, he was aware of the pursuit, and after following him for eighteen miles through a dense jungle I made up my mind he was far too keen a rogue for capture and pushed on to Boondella.

Early the next morning I came up with an elephant grazing in an opening surrounded with thick brush, in which I got, thus securing a side shot. The growth was too dense to make it possible to sight a vital spot, but my shot knocked it down.

In an instant it was up and away with a rush and a roar, leaving a bloody pathway behind. This we followed for hours and not until 4 o'clock did I decide that we were too hungry and weary to go further.

I was about to give orders to return to camp when we heard the trumpet-like of an elephant, and at once started toward the sound. After an hour and a half, going through an almost impassable jungle, at times forced to crawl on hands and knees, we came upon two elephants.

Without an instant delay I discharged both barrels in quick succession into the ear of the largest.

There was a roar and a crash, the one unscathed made off into the jungle, while the one at which I fired, after a few extremely ungraceful muscular contractions, died. He measured ten feet in height, twenty feet about the girth, and fourteen feet in length.

The tragedy occurred six miles from the cart path and ten miles from camp. By the guidance of my compass we returned to our encampment, taking care to cut down branches of

the underbrush at either side of our homeward path, relying on the swiftly withering foliage to guide our return on the morrow, when I intended to secure the skin.

The process of removing an elephant's hide is not without interest and a vast amount of labor. Fourteen men were needed to accomplish the task—a cart dragged by two sturdy bullocks brought it to camp.

The skin was two inches thick in places, and in order to remove it successfully from the side on which the animal had fallen a ditch had to be dug sufficiently deep to roll the beast over completely, with the aid of ropes and tackle.

At mid-day I encountered another elephant, which I wounded but slightly before he eluded me. We reached Wiriwila on the 23d to await the arrival of my friend and his party.

We had no sooner arrived than the natives told me of the recent appearance of an elephant near the place selected for our camp. Following their directions, we tracked for several hours, finally coming upon him comfortably enjoying a noonday siesta. He was lying with his massive head on a fallen tree and his feet stretched out in a pool of water.

It was with a brief sense of pity that I planned to creep up behind him and put two shots into his brain. Just as I was about to take aim a huge lizard scrambled out of the rank undergrowth near his head. Instantly the huge brute was on his feet, vacuic me, trunk in air, charging full upon us. The first bullet I fired went too high to prove fatal, but it made the beast pause long enough for the men to dodge to cover. As the smoke cleared away I rushed into the open to get a side shot between ear and eye. He recovered from his shock, and before I could raise my gun charged, only one shot remaining with which to finish him. I nerved myself and aimed straight for his face; a shot that entered his brain and dropped him almost at my feet.

A wild cheer from the natives, and three shots entered the beast from their guns in rapid succession. They literally danced on the great creature in their mad rejoicing.

As for me, I confess to a species of jungle fright that made "stage fright" seem an inviolable sensation. Telula was reached on the 23d, and preparations actively began to welcome the long-expected party which the next day brought.

This meeting in the wilderness was naturally a delightfully cordial one. With the party were the Marquis and Marchioness Breadbalks, both of whom, being devoted to hunting, enlivened our hours in camp with many intensely interesting narratives—the marquis having hunted elephants before and the marchioness having killed with a single shot a tiger—all the more remarkable, having been accomplished from the back of an elephant.

The morning following our union the party was divided in two. We however found the jungles at Telula so dangerously dense that after a most

exciting experience wherein the marquis came close to death from the onslaught of a maddened elephant and was saved by the timely shot from the gun of the blind tracker, Madama—a shot that turned the beast aside not an instant too soon—we returned to camp, neither party having made a kill, resolved not to risk further adventure in the dangerous jungles surrounding Telula.

The next day we pleasantly spent in resting from the previous day's wearing experiences—it was a day of reminiscent adventures and good fellowship.

The illness of the marchioness made the continuation of the hunt impossible and, after enjoying some less ambitious sport—shooting wild buffalo and small game—they discontinued their hunt on the 30th.

After bidding the party farewell, I returned to Wiriwila on April 1, pushing on to Karmida the next day, after some unsatisfactory tracking and laborious fording of the River Manak. I continued my tracking to Potana, travelling twenty miles on one day.

On the morning of the 7th I came upon two female elephants gossiping side by side, while some thirty yards behind followed a large male.

As he came uncomfortably close to the great tree, which concealed me, I fired, killing him instantly. In hysterical feminine fashion, the other two made off with lumbering swiftness.

As I raised my eyes from the fallen elephant, I was astonished to see a tiny baby elephant regarding the corpse with childish curiosity, singularly untouched by grief, if the slain was a near relative.

The creature was only three feet high, and while the law forbade the capture of any beast under six feet, I was strongly tempted and was about determined to kidnap this attractive infant, when evidently remembering the loitering offspring, the mother came wildly through the jungle.

Without deigning to notice aught else, she pushed her bulky infant in front of her with her trunk, and continued to accelerate its lagging footsteps with such vigor that at times it had difficulty in preserving its equilibrium. Somehow the incident recalled the humorous recovery of Hood's Lost Heir. The most unreasonable sportsman could not suppress a feeling of satisfaction, if, when standing by my side one morning at Potana, he could see looking through a clearing in the brush, wild buffalo and boar, deer, a porcupine and peacock—a peculiar mixture of God's creatures—truly a variety to suit the restocking of a second ark.

After skinning my last kill we went on to Kunnad, where on the afternoon of the 9th I discovered huge footprints measuring twenty inches in diameter.

I doubt if old Crusee felt any greater enthusiasm over Friday's.

This dainty tread was readily followed, and, after an exciting encounter with the elephantine Cinderella (which most inappropriately proved a male), I killed him with a shot between the eyes.

As he fell, I rushed toward him to

give him another shot, when, crashing straight for us, came another beast. His approach was such that it afforded me an excellent opportunity for a shot which rolled him almost at the feet of the first victim.

For a brief period the excitement was intense; turning I discovered the blind tracker beside me, his gun held in listless fashion. I asked for the gun-bearers. He answered my inquiry with a disdainful wave toward a tree, up which the valorous natives had climbed like monkeys, on the thickening of the fray.

For some time I strove strenuously to get a glimpse of an enormous rogue, on whose head the government had set a price.

After several days' search and an unpleasantly close encounter with his villainous trunk I abandoned seeking his society.

On one of the days of quest I encountered a mother bear who was carrying her infant son pick-a-back. After killing the mother I carried the youngster, that measured only twelve inches, to camp.

He was a bright little chap, with an abnormally overgrown voice. Kindness and plenty of condensed milk proved a satisfactory diet, and he grew in good temper and grace. His sole objection was for natives. I took him home to my little son, who found in him an agreeable, if sensational playfellow.

En route to Okanada, we forded the Panamee river, making the journey entirely by night and the light of the moon.

Reaching Okanada, I walked down toward a lake near which we had pitched camp. There by the water's edge was a mother elephant and her baby.

Instantly I dropped on my hands and knees, and crawled to a big tree. As I raised myself behind the shelter of its trunk, I saw some yards distant, evidently on watch, a huge tusker.

As I was sorely tempted to take a shot at him I had my attention drawn to the comedy being enacted in the water. The mother was standing in the lake, dipping the young one in as fast as he could scramble out. Finally, gaining his feet, the little creature wrapped his tiny trunk firmly about the leg of the mother and began to tug and pull with vehemence. Whether this was a playful attempt to overturn her Titan proportions or merely to signify that his bath was all-sufficient, I couldn't really determine.

Strange what a train of thought may be jogged into life in the brain of a man by a sight of something absolutely at variance—so dissimilar that it seems an absurdity to admit that it brought into being such a reverse. But at the sight of this great jungle monster dipping her offspring into his bath, I recalled with swift tenderness a graceful human mother, with shining eyes, reveling in the cupid curves of her wee nan-child as he submitted to his morning bath.

It was this moment's reverie that made me quite content to see this "little" family walk off unharmed into the green shadows of the jungle.

On the 19th, I secured the Mam-

moth Malefactor of the jungles without the expected excitement. Coming upon him while he was seeking emotional vent by tearing off branches of the trees and playfully uprooting the saplings, I was fortunate enough to send two well-aimed bullets into the brain. I found, on examining him, that he bore the scars of many encounters, both of ancient and recent date.

On our way to Panama, in passing through Okanda, we came upon the tracks of two elephants. After some time we came upon one of them who had just vacated his bathing pool to accommodate two buffalo. He was standing, regarding the bathers, who unfortunately caught sight of me, and were off frantically. The elephant, taking warning from their flight, vanished before I obtained a coveted shot. Undismayed, we followed him and drew near enough to hear him demolishing the jungle, when there appeared suddenly two bears that were sufficiently formidable to need dispatching. The necessary shots, of course, drove the elephant deeper into the jungle.

Again, we found ourselves far in the heart of the wilderness and night beginning to send its shadows and shades to bewilder the trackers, who finally confessed that they had lost their way.

Pausing to determine upon the wisest move, we suddenly heard a terrific crash, and in the gathering dusk we could discern outlines of an enormous elephant coming at us fiercely.

Every man who carried a gun discharged it at the monster, thus turning him back into the jungle. Veda explained that it was a waiting elephant and a rogue, and should we endeavor to pass on he would surely kill us.

It had been raining all day, and being drenched through made the news that the entire night had to be passed in the jungle extremely unpleasant.

After groping around we found some great gray rocks, upon which we climbed for the night. I removed my clothes as a preventive from cold, but my men refused to take this precaution. Daylight was welcomed with the joy of a Musselman whose god is the sun. We encountered many difficulties in getting to camp, after having been without food or drink for twenty-four hours. The night's experience threw the blind tracker Madama into a swiftly fatal fever, death coming soon after he arrived at the home of his recently married wife. He had won distinction in hundreds of hunts—his eye having been lost by a hand to hand encounter with a maddened buffalo, the horn of the brute having pierced it fatally. Bundwa, his brother, deciding to remain with me, we journeyed toward Panama. In fording a river en route I met with the distressing loss of my photographic outfit, containing over 200 pictures of the most interesting sort—the cart having turned over in the river while hold-

ing these things, they were totally destroyed by water.

While tracking with Bundwa, we discovered the largest elephant tracks yet seen, but when the elephant was killed he proved to be a jungle veteran, white with age, and lean from experience.

That night I suffered from the bite of a centipede, which made me perform some amateur surgery, with a razor and pass a long, sleepless night.

The next day, discovering that a quantity of ammunition had been stolen, I armed myself and my trusted cook, Thelemakappa, and, announcing my loss, said unless it was speedily returned I should be compelled to shoot the offenders.

This was something of a bluff, I confess, but it worked like a charm. The offenders came with the missing stores, which were laid at my feet, and the most servile attentions and seemingly genuine repentance followed.

After a journey of many weary days Lake Minneri was reached, and at the famous village of Kowudalawewa I pitched our camp and secured the services of the tracker of that province, Manika.

We learned of a herd of elephants numbering close to forty, and, after the usual pursuit, we encountered a part of the herd.

The intense excitement of such numbers affected our aim with a narrow escape from their vengeance—having rendered my license void by wounding more than two, I decided to break camp and return to Colombo.

A PARENTAL PURSUIT.

It was a warm, sultry night. Henrietta and her beau were on the front piazza.

The grandfather's clock in the broad hallway struck 10.

"Henrietta," grumbled her papa, taking her aside and whispering confidentially, "I warn you not to keep that young man on the stoop too late."

Then the old folk retired.

The grandfather's clock in the broad hallway struck 2.

"John," softly said an anxious, motherly voice, "it's 3 o'clock; I hear some one on the porch. I'm afraid Henrietta hasn't come upstairs yet."

The late father waited to hear no more. Slipping into enough clothes to make himself look respectable he made his way cautiously downstairs, opened the front door quietly and was just in time to see a dark, masculine form going down the front stoop. Sneaking forward, the paternal foot, hid within a heavy leather boot, shot forward and sent the retreating figure through the balmy atmosphere and up against the prickly rosebush. There was a frightful rattling of tin cans, which awakened the whole household and brought Henrietta from her little bedroom.

"Oh, father!" she screamed, "what have you done? what have you done?"

"I've taught that young scamp of yours that this ain't a nocturnal camp. I just caught him sneak in away an—"

"My young man," shrieked the daughter, "why, father, he went home three hours ago—and you've kicked our milkman—off—the-front-stoop!"—New York Press.

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